

HOW TO...

Create a mirror effect



FINAL IMAGE

Add a touch of class and a sense of space to graphics with a classic mirror effect. Adam Banks gets reflective and explains how to add instant impact to any image

Apple started the trend and now text, product packages, books and even people are pictured standing on a shiny surface with their reflection fading away below them. It's simple but effective, adding interest to a mundane graphic and creating a feeling of space, making the object seem more three-dimensional. It works particularly well on black; the classic example is in the CoverFlow feature in Apple's iTunes, which displays album covers. However, it can also be used on white or any colour.

Here we explain how to re-create the effect. If you want to follow this tutorial exactly, the image used is available on the cover CD. We've used Adobe Photoshop Elements 5, but a similar method will work in any good image editor.

1 Start Photoshop Elements and click on the option to Edit and Enhance Photos. Choose Open from the File menu, or press Ctrl-O, and browse to the image file you want to use. Having opened your photo, select the whole image by pressing Ctrl-A, then press Ctrl-X to cut it. The image is now stored in the Clipboard. Press D to set the foreground and background colours to the default black and white, then go to the Image menu and choose Resize, Canvas Size. Using the drop-down menu next to Height, set the units to Percent, then enter 200. Make sure Relative is unticked. In the position diagram below, click on the top middle square. Set Canvas extension color to Background. Click OK.

2 Press Ctrl-V to paste your image back on to the larger canvas and drag it to the top. Look at the Layers palette on the right; click the

triangle next to its name if you can't see its contents, or choose its name in the Window menu if you can't see it. You have a Background layer plus Layer 1, which contains your image. Now hold the Ctrl key down, click on the image within the canvas and drag it down to make a copy. Position this so it is up against the original image, then release the mouse button. The copy appears in the Layers palette as Layer 1 copy.

3 Go to Image, Rotate, Flip Layer Vertical. The copied image is mirrored and now looks like a reflection. Press Enter to confirm this. Next, you need to make it fade off. This could be done with a layer mask, but Photoshop Elements (unlike the full version of Photoshop) doesn't support layer masking, so you must work around this. First create a new layer by pressing Shift-Ctrl-N (or go to Layer, New, Layer). Click OK in the dialog box that appears to make an empty layer called Layer 2.

4 Activate the Gradient tool by pressing G or clicking the fourth icon from the bottom in the main toolbox on the left. Click on the gradient preview at the left of the Options bar at the top to open the Gradient Picker. Click on the triangle button at its top right to show a menu and choose the Default set of gradients. Click on the second thumbnail from the left, Foreground to Transparent (you'll see the label if you hover the mouse over the thumbnail). Next, along the Options bar, click on the first of the five blue icons to choose a Linear gradient. Click just below the centre of the canvas and drag down nearly to the bottom. The top of the canvas fills

with black, fading to transparent (you can see the underlying image through the transparent area). In the Layers palette, hold the Ctrl key and click on the thumbnail of Layer 2, your black gradient. This selects the non-transparent area of the layer. Press Shift-Ctrl-I to invert the selection, so the transparent area is selected (surrounded by flashing dots on the canvas). Then click on the name of Layer 1 copy and press Delete.

5 You don't need the gradient any more, so hide Layer 2 by clicking on the eye icon to the left of its name. Press Ctrl-D to cancel the selection (the flashing dots disappear). Click on the name of Layer 1 copy, then hold Shift and click on Layer 1, selecting both at once. Now go to Image, Transform, Perspective. Move the mouse cursor on to the bottom left handle of the box that appears around your images – the cursor shows a grey arrowhead – and holding down the Shift key, drag upwards to distort both images together. Click on the middle left handle and drag upwards. Then go to Image, Transform, Free Transform. Drag the middle left handle to the right, squashing the image, which completes the impression of perspective foreshortening. Press Enter to apply all the changes.

6 If you want a different background colour, select Background in the Layers palette and go to Edit, Fill Layer. In the Contents drop-down menu, choose Color to select a colour, or pick Black. Set Mode to Normal and Opacity to 100% and click OK. To adjust the reflection, click on Layer 1 copy in the Layers palette. At the top of the palette, reduce the Opacity setting. **CS**

